

BOOK REVIEW

Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: New Geopolitical Realities

Edited by Ash Rossiter and Brendon J. Cannon

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It is clear that in the 21st century, we are experiencing a paradigmatic shift from the West to the East, from Transatlantic to Pacific, as Asia has become the epicenter of global economics and politics. This century has brought profound challenges to the regional dynamics of the Asia-Pacific and to the existing international political structure, and China specifically has played a central role in changing regional and global politics with its swiftly growing economy and increasing military formation and activities, especially since 2008. In addition to changes in China's economic and military capabilities, many other factors, such as India's economic liberalization program and evolving security posture, the reorientation of Japan's foreign and security policy in a more assertive and hawkish direction, the United States' relative decline and the ambiguity of its stand in Asia have altered the balance of Asia-Pacific politics.

These changing international dynamics and new security orientations have led to a redefinition of the geopolitical terming of the region. The construction of the term 'Indo-Pacific' as a replacement for 'Asia-Pacific' reflects the new geopolitical structure, which is characterized by multipolarity and multiplexity, in contrast to the previous Cold War positioning and dynamics. The Asia-Pacific term, which was designed to integrate Japan and to a certain level Australia in the U.S. Cold War strategy, has become inadequate to reflect the current power changes. As a result, a more comprehensive conceptualization was required by the United States and its partners in Asia. The broader Indo-Pacific conceptualization signifies the importance of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean and the maritime routes, and it reflects critical geopolitical

changes such as the growing economic and political capabilities of China and India as well as the changing U.S. posture.

The edited volume, *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: New Geopolitical Realities*, aims to analyze the possibilities of conflict and cooperation in the region by focusing on the different perspectives and strategies of the actors involved in the Indo-Pacific discussions. As the authors argue, the examples and different perspectives presented in various chapters are analyzed through this lens of cooperation and conflict. Rossiter and Cannon argue that beyond the book's contribution to International Relations (IR) and Geopolitics Studies, it is an essential text for understanding the debates about China's growing ascendance and the relative decline of U.S. power.

The structure of the book is designed around nine chapters. After the brief introductory chapter, which focuses on the prospects of conflict and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, subsequent chapters deal with the different perspectives and approaches of regional actors regarding the concept of Indo-Pacific and its construction. The first four chapters mainly deal with the approaches of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) countries: India's policy toward the Quad, Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) vision, the inclusion of Indo-Pacific in U.S. policies as a replacement for the Asia-Pacific concept and Australia's approach to the Indo-Pacific. Although there have been different interpretations of the term Indo-Pacific, the primary rationale behind its creation is the fact that the older term Asia-Pacific does not meet the strategic expectations of actors such as the United States, Japan, Australia or India. The new conceptualization has become an integral part of the national security strategies of the U.S., Japan and Australia, and has been frequently used in public speeches.

In the chapter titled "India's Approach to the "Quad" and the Salience of China," Jagannath Panda deals with India's relations with the other Quad countries. India can be considered at the heart of this new conceptualization, since its main aim is to incorporate India and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in these recent strategic calculations. Many analysts attribute the emergence of the Quad to growing anti-China sentiment in these countries. However, in this chapter, Panda explains India's involvement in this grouping as the result of the country's desire

to maintain equilibrium in the region, rather than strong anti-China sentiments.

In the following chapter, “Decoding Japan’s “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” Concept,” Teruaki Aizawa and Ash Rossiter examine Japan’s vision for the Indo-Pacific. The authors focus on the FOIP concept and how it gained prominence in Japan’s foreign and security policy vision for the region. Aizawa and Rossiter emphasize that even though the FOIP vision is mainly designed for economic purposes, its reflections on the security strategy are evident in Japan’s growing assertiveness in foreign and security policies. In the chapter “US Strategic Re-positioning to the “Indo-Pacific:” A Paradigm Shift, David Scott discusses the roots of the change in U.S. discourse from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific and evaluates its effects on U.S. policies. Scott makes a comparison between the U.S. geoeconomic and geopolitical approach to the region, and argues that the U.S. geopolitical approach has been much more comprehensive and successful compared to its geoeconomic position. Miguel A. Hajar-Chiapa next discusses what the emerging Indo-Pacific concept means for another Quad country, Australia, and analyzes the effects of this new construction there.

Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific covers not only the actors whose inclusion in the region is specifically important and who are more prominent, but also offers another perspective by introducing competing visions for the region. Moreover, it offers an in-depth analysis of the Indo-Pacific debate by looking at regional countries’ interactions, focusing on the relations between Japan and the Eastern African countries, and actors such as the Philippines, whose involvement and policies regarding the region are somehow understudied.

From the beginning, *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific* is well structured and contributes to the field of international politics and geopolitics by investigating approaches to the Indo-Pacific from cooperation and conflict perspectives. The presentation of different definitions by showing them on maps visually supports the lack of consensus on the definition of the concept. In the introductory section, the main framework of analysis that is used throughout the volume to present different actors and different cases is explained in detail. In the first four chapters, this framework is applied to the Quad countries, which

can be regarded as the major players in the Indo-Pacific. In the next three chapters, it is applied to the competing ideas. The detailed empirical analysis in the subsequent chapters validates the applicability of this framework to the issue and brings forward insights from different cases. While examples of different approaches are included, South Korean and Canadian perspectives are notably lacking as major regional powers. Their inclusion would have strengthened the book, but their absence points a direction for further study.

Since its (re)inception in the 2000s, the term Indo-Pacific has gradually entered the IR lexicon and has been used frequently by many actors, primarily the U.S., Japan and Australia. The term has become an integral part of international political debates. Therefore, the contribution made by *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific* is of critical importance. It sheds light on recent developments in the region while stressing the importance of the China-U.S. encounter. Ultimately, the volume argues that the dynamics of international order will be determined by the level of cooperation among the countries that share similar concerns about China and its activities.

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